



These Are the Freest Countries in the World

The United States isn't even close on a list topped by Hong Kong.

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November 29, 2016

The United States prides itself on upholding freedom, but recent research indicates America is not as free as many other countries.

In fact, it might be less free now than it was before.

According to the Human Freedom Index, which "presents the state of human freedom in the world based on a broad measure that encompasses personal, civil, and economic freedom," America is the 23rd freest country in the world.

The U.S. fell from 16th place in 2008 and 19th place in 2013.

The index is co-published by the Cato Institute, a libertarian, free-market-oriented think tank based in Washington, D.C., in collaboration with the conservative-leaning Fraser Institute in Canada, and the Liberales Institut at the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom in Germany.

"Human freedom is a social concept that recognizes the dignity of the individual. The declining performance of the United States, once considered the bastion of liberty, is worrisome," Ian Vasquez, director of the Cato Institute's Center for Global Liberty and Prosperity and co-author of the study, said in a press release. "We should all be concerned with the impact on liberty of the war on terror, the war on drugs, and the decline in the rule of law and economic liberty in the United States."

According to the release, the index "ranks 159 countries based on 79 distinct indicators of personal, civil, and economic freedom, using data from 2008 to 2014, the most recent year for which sufficient data is available."

The index found Hong Kong to be the freest country, followed closely by Switzerland.

Other notable rankings include Russia, which ranked 115th, and China, which ranked 141st. Meanwhile, Iran, Yemen and Libya rounded out the bottom of the list.

| Country Name | Human Freedom Rank | Best Countries Overall Rank |
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|--------------|--------------------|-----------------------------|

| Country Name | Human Freedom Rank | Best Countries Overall Rank |
|----------------|--------------------|-----------------------------|
| Hong Kong | 1 | Not ranked |
| Switzerland | 2 | Not ranked |
| New Zealand | 3 | 11 |
| Ireland | 4 | 18 |
| Denmark | 5 | 10 |
| Canada | 6 (tie) | 2 |
| United Kingdom | 6 (tie) | 3 |
| Australia | 6 (tie) | 6 |
| Finland | 9 | Not ranked |
| Netherlands | 10 | 9 |